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HERBERT B. ADAMS.

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS

BY

JOHN MARTIN VINCENT,
PROFESSOR, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

(From the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1901,
Vol. I, pages 197-210.)

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A MEMORIAL ADDRESS, BY JOHN MARTIN VINCENT.

In presenting a memorial to the late Prof. Herbert B. Adams I stand as one among a large number who would be glad to bring forward their tributes of respect and affection. The ties which bound him to his contemporaries were numerous and varied. To his students he was an inspiring teacher and a faithful friend. To the world of educators he was an adviser whose opinions and cooperation were sought and shared by many. To the members of this association he was a trusted leader and hopeful comrade. Hence this paper will not stand alone. Numerous estimates of his work and character have already appeared in the periodical press, but it is fitting that in the proceedings of the society which he did so much to found and to foster a brief biographical sketch should appear. It is with this in view that I take this place, and for the reason that circumstances have placed within my reach materials for the description of his earlier life and later academic history. In fact, Professor Adams himself had collected from time to time the chief items in his own career, and of these I have made free use. My only regret is that this matter was not left more in autobiographical form, so that it might be presented to you with the charm of reminiscence.

Herbert Baxter Adams was born at Shutesbury (near Amherst), Mass., April 16, 1850. His father was Nathaniel Dickinson Adams, a lumber merchant and selectman of Shutesbury, and a descendant of Henry Adams, who settled in Braintree, Mass., 1634. His mother was Harriet Hastings, a descendant of Deacon Thomas Hastings, who settled in Watertown, Mass., 1634. Lieut. Thomas Hastings, of the Revolutionary army, was also a member of this family, and the race as a whole was of sound Puritan stock.

Herbert B. Adams prepared for Amherst College in the public schools of his adopted town of Amherst, whither his

mother and two brothers removed after the father's death, which occurred, September 7, 1856. The older brothers continued their studies at Williston Seminary, East Hampton, Mass.; the oldest, Charles Dickinson Adams, was afterwards graduated, at the head of his class, at Amherst College, 1863, and became a prominent and respected lawyer in New York City. He died March 20, 1889. The second brother, Henry Martyn Adams, went from Williston Seminary to Troy Polytechnic Institute, and thence to West Point Military Academy, from which he was graduated at the head of his class in 1866. He now holds the rank of colonel and is a member of the United States Board of Engineers, being stationed at present at New Orleans.

At the suggestion of his elder brother, H. B. Adams entered Phillips Exeter Academy in the winter of 1867 and was graduated with honor in the class of 1868. He won the Porter prize for the best entrance examination at Amherst College in the fall of that year and was graduated with the valedictory in 1872. The following year he taught Latin, Greek, mathematics, and classical history at Williston Seminary, where he succeeded Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst, now of New York, as teacher of the middle classical class. After a year at Williston he was encouraged by his elder brother to go abroad for higher studies and sailed for Germany to take up history. This was in fulfillment of a desire first conceived at Phillips Exeter Academy and strengthened at Amherst College. Young Adams acquired his taste for history from books given him at school by his elder brother and by early privileges, obtained as a subfreshman, of drawing books from the library of Amherst College. President Julius H. Seelye confirmed this early historical bent of mind by a single lecture on "History" in Adams's senior year, but it was President Seelye who originally gave him a written permit to use the college library years before the boy entered the institution.

Adams said of his own life at Amherst:

My editorial connection with the Amherst Student really gave a permanent bent to my life. I learned more real useful knowledge in that voluntary connection than in all other college means of training—in punctuation, composition, and rhetoric. To this day I can discern more lasting influences proceeding from that editorial den of mine at Amherst than from any other one college source. I have forgotten my mathematics, which I always hated, but in which I always ranked high by reason of my

Exeter training; but I shall never forget how to revise other people's manuscript and read proof, although I hate that, too.

His private reading in college was chiefly in connection with the subjects upon which he had to write or debate. History was not a large part of his collegiate training, and we might be a little surprised that he afterwards devoted his life to it. Of this he says himself: "Of history we had nothing at all after the freshman year, when Smith's Manuals of Greece and Rome were studied in well-chosen selections." The impulse came later. "I remember in the philosophical course by the president of the college one remarkable lecture on the 'Philosophy of history.' After rapidly reviewing the course of civilization, Dr. Seelye said that history was the grandest study in the world. That sentence decided my fate. I determined to devote myself to that grand subject. Up to that time I had no career in mind except journalism. I had written more or less for the Amherst Record and for the New York and Boston papers when I found a chance to do any reporting. But now my mind was quickly made up to pursue the 'grandest study in the world'—the recorded experience of mankind."

Before settling down in Germany Adams studied French for some months at Lausanne, Switzerland, whither he had been directed by Professor Lalande, his French tutor at Williston Seminary, and by whom he was personally introduced to a teacher in Professor Thébault, of the Lycée. After Lausanne there followed a few months of study and travel in Italy and a second brief sojourn in Paris. Here he met his elder brother, who dissuaded him from further study in France and urged him to take up German university life at once.

In January, 1874, he proceeded to Heidelberg with many pleasant anticipations, for the place had been graphically pictured to him by an Exeter fellow-student, a German-American named Mövus. Here he met his Amherst College friend, John B. Clark, now professor in Columbia University, and with him heard the lectures of Wilhelm Ihne on Roman history, Kuno Fischer on German literature and philosophy, and Heinrich von Treitschke on politics. At Heidelberg Adams lived in the family of the late Dr. Emil Otto, author of the well-known grammars, and with him studied and practiced German, at the same time making many acquaintances

and good friends among German students. He continued also the daily practice of French conversation with Swiss students and in a Swiss family of his acquaintance. Thus passed the winter and summer of that academic year.

After a tour of north Germany and a visit to the Amherst men residing in Göttingen, Adams spent the winter semester of 1874-75 at the University of Berlin. The professors who interested him most were Ernst Curtius, who lectured on Greek art and archæology; Hermann Grimm, who illustrated early Christian and Italian art by familiar talks in the Royal Museum; Lepsius, who, in the same museum, discoursed on Egyptology; Zeller, the historian of Greek philosophy; Droysen, who lectured on the French Revolution; and Treitschke, who had just come with great eclat from Heidelberg, and whom Adams, like many other students, had really followed to Berlin. The mentor and friend of young Adams in Berlin was Elihu H. Root, a pupil of Helmholtz and afterwards professor of physics in Amherst College.

In the summer of 1875, somewhat discouraged at the prospect of an expensive and a protracted course of study necessary for the doctor's degree in Berlin, Adams would have returned home to America and actually forwarded his books to Glasgow with that intent; but, while on a tour through Southern Germany, he received a generous letter from his elder brother urging him to remain in Germany and finish what he had begun at Heidelberg. Accordingly he returned for another year and, in the summer of 1876, under the guidance of Prof. J. C. Bluntschli, completed a definite course in historical and political science. In these subjects he was examined by Bluntschli, the statesman, and Knies, the economist, and was awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy by the political science faculty, July 14, 1876.

In a little old diary which Adams kept during this period there are interesting entries of his reading for this examination. Great sections of Bluntschli's *Staatslehre*, *Völkerrecht*, and *Staatswörterbuch*, were consumed from day to day. While reviewing his notes a month beforehand he writes: "Headache; scared over the prospect of exam." Hence we are prepared for the entry of July 13: "The die is cast. Studied until dinner. Am nervous—had a bad night. Loaf until 6 p. m. Examination from 6-8 p. m. Summa eum laude. Knies, Bluntschli, Erdmannsdörfer, Winkelmann,

Stark, Ribbeck, Weil, and others present." On the 15th of July Adams bade farewell to his professors and entered in his diary the comment: "Bluntschli a trump."

Through Bluntschli's personal influence and recommendation Adams had been appointed, while still at Heidelberg, to the fellowship in history at the Johns Hopkins University. It is interesting to note in this connection that about a year after Bluntschli's death (October 21, 1881) his private library was publicly presented (December 20, 1882) to the Johns Hopkins University by a group of German citizens of Baltimore, who thus contributed to the doubly patriotic object of presenting the library of a German statesman to an American school of historical and political science. (See "Bluntschli, Lieber, and Laboulaye" and "Bluntschli's Life-Work" by H. B. Adams, privately printed in 1884 by John Murphy & Co.) This library was the first memorable public gift to the new university.

When Dr. Adams came to Baltimore as fellow in history, at the opening of the university, in the fall of 1876, Dr. Austin Scott, a graduate of Yale University, 1869, and now president of Rutgers College, was in charge of the work in history. At that time he was the coadjutor of Mr. George Bancroft in the revision of his history of the United States, and in the preparation of Bancroft's last great work on the Formation of the Constitution. Dr. Scott resided in Washington, but came to Baltimore once or twice a week for the conduct of a seminary of American history, which used to meet in one of the rooms of the Maryland Historical Society. It was in connection with the work of this seminary that Dr. Adams prepared his first printed monograph, entitled "Maryland's Influence in Founding a National Commonwealth, or the History of the Accession of Public Lands by the Old Confederation." This was published in 1877 by the Maryland Historical Society as Fund Publication No. 11, and was afterwards, in 1885, republished in revised form by the university. The monograph presents some of Dr. Adams's favorite subjects of study; for example, the importance of our western territory as a necessary economic and historic basis for the American Union. George Washington's interest in western lands, in the Potomac Company (historic forerunner of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal) and in the project of a national university continued to influence Dr. Adams throughout his academic life. He

believed most strongly in our first President's notion of a great school of political science, midway between the North and the South, to which young men from both sections could come and, by friendly association, do away in some measure with what Washington called "local attachments and State prejudices."

The first work of Dr. Adams as a teacher in the Johns Hopkins University began while he was yet a fellow. At first he had a class of two once a week and a class of one twice a week. Both were voluntary. The class of one was peripatetic and consisted of a park walk and a talk on American constitutional history with George M. Sharp (now Judge Sharp). The class of two was on the outlines of European history and met in one of the old buildings, since torn down.

The register of the university for the third year, 1878-79, contains the first mention of Dr. Adams's regular collegiate classwork: "European History during the Middle Ages," four times weekly, first half year, with 14 students. At the same time Dr. Scott's "seminary of American history" met for advanced work once weekly through the year and enrolled 15 students. Adams was also actively connected with this.

In the spring of 1878 Dr. Adams was invited to Smith College, Northampton, Mass., to lecture to the first three regular classes of that new institution. He gave them written lectures on the history of church and state, which he had originally prepared and which he had already given in part at the Johns Hopkins University in the previous year, to a semi-public audience of ladies and gentlemen. The invitation to Smith College was the beginning of Dr. Adams's academic promotion, for, when called to a professorship in Northampton, he was appointed at a lower salary an associate in history in Baltimore. He continued to hold both positions for some years, lecturing on history at Smith College during the spring term.

It was at a June commencement in Northampton that President Gilman once began his address with this pleasant introduction:

I know not what unseen ties may bind Smith College and the Johns Hopkins University together, but I do know that they both have the same teacher of history, who, in his annual migrations from Northampton to Baltimore, brings us tidings of the beautiful, the true, and the good.

This springtime experience of Dr. Adams in the Connecti-

cut Valley, only a few miles from his own home, he always looked back upon with the greatest pleasure.

In 1881 Edward A. Freeman visited America and spent some time in Baltimore lecturing at the Peabody Institute and at Johns Hopkins University. He took much interest in the historical work of the university, and in an English Review, and later in his book called "Impressions of the United States," Mr. Freeman said:

A young and growing school which still has difficulties to struggle against may be glad of a good word on either side of the ocean. I can not help mentioning the school which is now devoting itself to the special study of local institutions, a school which is spread over various parts of the Union, but which seems to have its special home in the Johns Hopkins University, at Baltimore, as one from which great things may be looked for. Nor can I help adding the name of my friend, Mr. Herbert B. Adams, as that of one who has done much for the work, and who, to me at least, specially represents it.

For several years after his visit to Baltimore, and after his call to the historical professorship at Oxford, Mr. Freeman continued to write encouraging letters to Dr. Adams. In an article entitled "Mr. Freeman's visit to Baltimore" Dr. Adams gave an account of a great service rendered by Freeman and James Bryce to Maryland and the Maryland Historical Society. They visited the building of the Historical Society and there were made acquainted with the archives of the State. Afterwards each of the visitors wrote a letter regarding the importance of preserving and publishing the manuscript records of the Commonwealth. These opinions, made public by the Historical Society and reinforced by prominent citizens and the whole Baltimore delegation to the legislature, were laid before the general assembly, while a sharp newspaper campaign was conducted by Dr. Adams. The result was the removal of the colonial papers from Annapolis to Baltimore and the beginning of their publication at State expense.

We see from Mr. Freeman's description the tendency of the historical seminary which Adams was quietly building up. At first it was held in the rooms of the Maryland Historical Society, then in a basement room of the Peabody Library, where he was allowed to collect and use books on English constitutional history. Shortly before Mr. Freeman's visit the Bluntschli Library was received, and he found both seminary and books installed in handsome quarters on the university premises. In these rooms, since devoted to mineralogy,

passed the stirring period of Adams's university career. It is to that seminary table, placed in the midst of a laboratory of books and literally lighted from above, that the recollections of the older generation of Hopkins historians return.

Adams himself was at this time deeply interested in the origin of New England towns and other local institutions, for which he made numerous original investigations. He derived the impulse not from Freeman, but from a study of Sir Henry Maine and Von Maurer, first suggested by Professor Erdmannsdörfer in a Heidelberg seminary.

The researches of Adams's seminary progressed so vigorously that a regular form of publication was found desirable. In 1882 he began the issue of the "Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science." To give the enterprise an impulse, Mr. Freeman after his return to England wrote an "Introduction to American Institutional History." It was this phrase which suggested to the academic council nearly ten years later the title of Adams's professorial chair.

At the time they were started the historical studies were new, and at once attracted attention at home and abroad. The personal contributions of the editor were numerous, chiefly in the field of American institutional and educational history. These publications set the example in this country for original academic contributions to historical and political science in serial form. In twenty years such monographs and periodicals have increased to a wonderful degree, and all are adding something to the scientific and economic capital of the country, but we must look back to Adams as the leader of the movement.

The value of the studies was recognized at once. John Fiske, more than ten years ago, said:

In studying the local institutions of our different States I have been greatly helped by the Johns Hopkins University Studies in History and Politics. * * * In the course of the pages below I have frequent occasion to acknowledge my indebtedness of these learned and sometimes profoundly suggestive monographs, but I can not leave the subject without a special word of gratitude to my friend, Dr. Herbert B. Adams, editor of the series, for the noble work which he is doing in promoting the study of American history.

The works of James Bryce and other writers upon American institutions are full of notes derived from the special monographs of this series.

In 1884 Dr. Adams joined with Justin Winsor, Andrew D. White, Charles Kendall Adams, Clarence W. Bowen, and others in the organization of this American Historical Association. The records of his official connection are to be found in the long series of its publications. It is to be found also in the memories of a greater number of you who are present on this occasion. But those who have not stood close to Adams in his lifetime can scarcely realize the amount of time and attention which he devoted to this Association, not only in preparation for its annual meetings, the arrangements of programmes and addresses, but in the constant daily attention to its business and progress. Notwithstanding the fact that he was furnished with most efficient clerical assistance, there were always innumerable questions to be referred to him for decision, and it was close attention to this infinitude of detail which carried forward the Association with smoothness and precision. But, of all his work for the Association, Adams was proudest of the part he took in obtaining a national charter in 1889. He regarded the connection with the Smithsonian Institution as a most important extension of usefulness and a union to be fostered and utilized with every care.

Adams's contributions to historical literature were chiefly monographic. In 1893, however, he brought out in two large octavo volumes the *Life and Writings of Jared Sparks*. He had been persuaded by the late Andrew P. Peabody and by the widow of Jared Sparks to undertake the examination of his voluminous papers. It was a laborious task, for the editor of *Washington's Writings*, the *Diplomatic Correspondence*, and a long series of American biographies, *North American Review*, and the writings of Benjamin Franklin had left an embarrassment of riches for a review of his own life work. I well recollect the vast collection of pamphlet cases and documentary files which filled for many years some of the closets in Adams's university office. It seemed an interminable labor even to examine the series at hand, for Sparks was a man who never threw away a letter, even if it were an invitation to a dinner. All this had to be sifted in the preparation of the volumes which were to show the characteristic activity of the man. Dr. George E. Ellis says of these books: "The just as well as the highest encomium upon the work of this biographer is spoken when we say in full sincerity that we can conceive that he would have from Mr. Sparks himself the warmest

expression of approval and gratitude for the ability, fidelity, good taste, and wise judgment with which he has wrought his exacting labor." (Proceedings of the Massachusetts Society, 1894.)

In 1887 Dr. Adams began to edit for the United States Bureau of Education a series of contributions to American educational history. These begin with a monograph on the college of William and Mary. In this he took occasion to put forward some of his own ideas about higher education, with suggestions for its national promotion. He advocated the founding in Washington of a civil academy which should be in matters of political science and civil-service training what West Point and Annapolis are in military and naval education. This idea was derived from old William and Mary College, the first school of history, politics, and economics in this country. The idea is reinforced by Washington's plan of a national university midway between the North and the South, which seems in these days to be approaching a realization.

Dr. Adams further contributed to his educational series Thomas Jefferson and the University of Virginia, and another elaborate report on the Study of History in American Colleges and Universities. With the approval of successive commissioners of education, he arranged for a series of histories of higher education in the various States of the Union. These have been prepared by authors and subeditors selected by Dr. Adams, and of the 32 monographs all but 3 were completed at the time of his death. Adams also prepared for the Bureau of Education special monographs on popular education. Chautauqua schools in America and in Europe, university extension in Great Britain, and university extension in America were also given a thorough treatment.

Adams's interest in these forms of education led him also to lecture for several years before the Chautauqua Lake Assembly. His latest report in this field was a monograph prepared for the Paris Exposition on Popular Education in the United States. It may be said that in the educational domain, this field interested him in late years more than any other. On his desk he pinned a card containing the words of Jules Siegfried, senator of France, "The education of the people is the first duty of democracy."

Adams remained steadily in Baltimore for twenty-five years.

He had every inducement to go to other institutions of learning, but for personal reasons preferred to remain where he began. At the time of the Chicago Exposition in 1893, he was offered the directorship of the department of liberal arts, and at the same time he had offered him the professorship of history and the deanship of the graduate department of Chicago University. But with all due respect to the promising future there spread before him, he preferred to stay by the department of his first love. It was while still in the harness which he assumed in 1876 that he was first stricken down in 1899. He continued two years longer in the vain hope of restoration to activity, and died at Amherst, Mass., July 30, 1901.

To those who worked under Adams as students or assistants the predominating notes in his teaching were inspiration and sympathy. This was not due to a profundity of thought in his lectures which might create wonder and admiration for himself in a body of disciples. His lectures were, indeed, sound and interesting, but he was also continually pointing to more work to be done, more fields to be cultivated, and more reputations to be made. At every opportunity he brought before his classes particularly the work of men who had gone out from the seminary. Reports of their successes or failures, their promotions or their publications, came before the young men almost daily, until they became acquainted by name with the whole family of fellow-investigators. Such things as these men did were within reach of the young aspirant, and the effect was to spur every man to do something worthy of that company and that university. The results were unequal, but the inspiration was universal and lasting.

This friendly counsel continued after men had gone out to fill positions in the professional world. He spared no pains in answering requests for advice, whether it related to academic methods or private affairs. His numerous literary and editorial connections placed him in position to point out work to a large number of men; consequently his friendship became an ever-widening circle. The fact that he never married may have allowed him to take an individual interest in his "boys," as he was wont to call the men who had gone out from his department.

In business affairs he was a man of thrift, but this permitted

him to be useful to others. Many a student was the recipient of temporary economic aid, loaned unostentatiously and with a confidence rarely misplaced. He bought books freely for himself and for the seminary, and before his death presented his large private library to the university. Outside of a few family bequests he devoted his whole estate to public purposes. To the town of Amherst he gave his own home, as a memorial to his parents, and to Amherst College \$2,000, as a fund for the purchase of books. To the American Historical Association he left \$5,000 unconditionally. To the university which he served for twenty-five years he gave the balance of his estate to form the Herbert B. Adams fund, the income of which must be devoted to the promotion of history, politics, and education.

Adams took a great interest in religion, especially as viewed from the historical standpoint. For many years he lectured upon the development of religious belief, tracing it through the Orient and the Hebrews into Christianity. The result was wide catholicity of sentiment on his own part and broad interpretation of the Christian doctrines. He was not a man who took a prominent part in the devotional side of religion, but was a constant member and attendant upon church services and gave thought to his own belief. In a paper written some years ago I found a creed written in his own hand in which his beliefs and hopes are placed in an all-wise Providence, and in what may be called the broad essentials of Christian doctrine.

In practical work his sympathies were bound by no single church, for he was constantly aiding the educational movement of all denominations. Ministers, priests, rabbis, committees from Christian associations, and all sorts of workers were continually consulting with him in regard to social work. To these forms of religious activity he devoted many hours of his life.

This was a busy man, who wore himself out at the age of 51. One-half of his allotted time was devoted to preparation and one-half to the fulfillment of his life work. We looked for a longer sojourn among us, that he might continue activity in the prime of life and reap the honors and rewards of old age. But since it was otherwise decreed, I leave a feeble tribute in the archives of the Association of which he was an honored officer and devoted friend.





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